Delay in issuance of passports

200. SHRI C. RAMACHANDRAIAH : Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state :

(a) whether passports are not being issued within stipulated time-frame on account of police verification report; and

(b) if so, the action taken to counter the increasing number of pending passport applications in regional passport offices all over the country ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI OMAR ABDULLAH) : (a) Issuance of passports in most cases gets delayed due to non-receipt of police verification report, incomplete/ incorrect filling of the application forms or shortage of staff in the Central Passport Organisation.

(b) The number of pending passport applications in all the Passport Offices is monitored on a weekly basis. Cases of delay in Police Verification are taken up with the State Police authorities.

Violation of commitment by Pakistani President

201. SHRI MOOLCHAND MEENA :

DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY :

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state :

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the statement made by the Pakistani President that he did not promise to close terrorist camps and to stop infiltration across the Line of Control;

(b) if so, whether Government have consulted the countries who had conveyed the promise of Pakistani President to India in the past;

(c) if so, the reaction of those countries; and

(d) the steps Government have now firmly taken to meet the situation in view of his violation of international commitment ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH) : (a) On June 22, 2002 Pakistan President General Musharraf during his interview to the Newsweek, tried to backtrack on his commitment to stop cross-border infiltration on a permanent basis. He claimed that he gave no assurance that 'for years nothing will happen' across the LoC or that he made any commitment on closing the terrorist camps.

(b) and (c) Subsequently, US State Department Spokesman unambiguously clarified that, contrary to what was reported in the Newsweek interview, General Musharraf had indeed given the assurance to Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage on stopping cross-border infiltration on a permanent basis. It was also stated that General Musharraf had reiterated his commitments of putting an end to cross-border infiltration on a permanent basis to President George Bush and Secretary of State Colin Powell during their conversations. The UK also rebutted the claims made by General Musharraf in his interview.

(d) Government are firmly resolved to continue taking all necessary measures to defeat Pakistan's sponsorships of cross-border terrorism in India.

Facilities to Mansarovar pilgrims

†202. DR. A. K. PATEL : Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state :

(a) whether Government are aware of the fact that the number of pilgrims to Mansarovar is on the constant rise every year;

†Original notice of the Question was received in Hindi.